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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//JF/UNMA//  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3//  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2377  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2575  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5753  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1218

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001358

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STATE FOR SA/FO (DAS GASTRIGHT), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB,  
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E.O. 12958 N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT/MAZAR-E SHARIF DOSTUM PRESIDES OVER  
WEAPONS TURNOVER

REF: KABUL 840

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- [1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: General Dostum, the paramount warlord in northern Afghanistan, presided over a Feb. 23 ceremony in Sheberghan, capital of Jowzjan Province north of Mazar-e Sharif, during which over 100 of his commanders turned in 2.5 tons of boxed ammunition and roughly 400 small arms, RPG launchers, grenade launchers, and other weapons. Disarmament officials were impressed by the quantity and quality of the ammunition turned over. Moving from handing in weapons to disbanding illegally-armed groups is, however, a longer, more difficult process. END SUMMARY.
- [1](#)2. (SBU) At what ostensibly was a ceremony honoring the 565 th birthday of an ethnic-Uzbek poet at his palace in Sheberghan, General Dostum orchestrated a turnover of a significant quantity of weapons and ammunition by more than 100 of his Junbesh commanders to officials from the Afghan New Beginnings Program (ANBP), the international body which implements DIAG (Disbandment of Illegally-Armed Group) as over 1000 people and representatives of local and international news media looked on. During the ceremony, Dostum distributed certificates of appreciation to the commanders, thanking them for their part in the struggle to liberate Afghanistan from the Soviets and the Taliban, and in the ongoing effort to eliminate Al Qaeda in the north.
- [1](#)3. (SBU) Of the 389 weapons turned in, 110 were AK-

47s. The weapons were old and the final report from ANBP indicated 36% were unserviceable, which hovers inside ANBPs average unserviceability range of 35-40%. Significantly, however, nearly all the bad weapons consisted of old AK-47s only six of the 109 submitted functioned. On the other hand, nearly all the heavier weapons turned in, including RPG7s, 82mm mortars and recoilless rifles, were operational and in good condition. Personnel from ANBP and AST (Ammunition Survey Team) collected the weapons, which were then transported immediately to Mazar-e Sharif where they were accounted for, stocked, and transferred to an ammunition dump at the 209th Corps

S (monitored by a U.S. embedded training team). The 209th Corps site was selected in lieu of the ammo dump in Sheberghan, where the weapons might well may have found their way back to the original donors.

14. (SBU) The weapons turnover was the result of nearly six weeks of regular meetings and discussions between PRToff and General Dostum and his subordinates. After nearly eight months of silence, Dostum initiated contact with the PRT, indicating a renewed desire to engage with the international community (IC) and the GOA. He seems to have realized how little leverage he had gained in the interim by refusing to interact with ISAF forces, and appeared willing to work once again towards fulfilling GOA/IC expectations of regional stability and most importantly, DIAG compliance.

15. (SBU) His long silence is believed to be the result of the Mazar PRTs initial approach to the Dostum problem, which began with repeated demands for weapons and culminated in search-and-seizure re

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operations last year. General Dostum has a great deal of influence across the north, as his militias and Junbesh political party (from which he nominally resigned on taking a largely ceremonial posting in the central government) control the provinces of Faryab, Sar-e Pol, and Jowzjan, and are thought to have strong support in Takhar and Balkh. His decision to halt interaction with the PRT was a great concern to the north, as Junbesh continued to project military power in addition to playing a large role in the appointments process for districts and provinces under its control. Lacking a clear channel for communication, the PRT had no constructive leverage over these decisions and activities which have a significant impact on regional security and stability.

16. (SBU) In a meeting with Dostum following the ceremony, PRToff emphasized the need to build on the days momentum with subsequent events in other provinces. PRToff argued the event in Sheberghan grabbed the attention of the north, particularly the PRTs there, and Dostum now needed to substantiate it by similar displays in neighboring provinces by his commanders. PRToff suggested that given recent unrest in Faryab and Jowzjan provinces and the cartoon riots against the PRT in Maimana, along with the nearly complete political and military power Junbesh enjoys there, Faryab seemed the logical choice for the next turnover.

17. (SBU) As a result of his recent activities, General Dostum expects to bring more development aid to the north (in addition to garnering more political power for himself and his party). The impression among northern Afghans is that they are shortchanged on development aid that is going to the restive Pashtun south and east, and therefore they have less buy-in to the reconstruction process. If Dostum is viewed as a conduit for bringing in more aid then the kudos will go to him first, and to the

IC second. Dostums move comes at a time of increasing unrest in the northern region (i.e., the cartoon riots, increased number of security incidents), and an effort to disarm publicly in an atmosphere of increasing friction between various competing illegally armed groups may lower tensions somewhat. The IC would be well served to publicize more broadly ongoing development programs to remind the northern people of their continued importance and draw a link between disarmament, stabilization, and propensity for development spending.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: As Faizullah Zaki, a Junbesh MP said, For the last thirty years, every arms factory in the world has been exporting to Afghanistan. The sheer quantity of weapons in the region makes Dostums weapons turnover appear insignificant. The importance of the event, however, is that it is a symbol of Dostums willingness to play ball with the GOA and IC. The benefits of engaging Dostum if he feels it is beneficial to work with DIAG, DIAG will happen in the north. If he sees DIAG as a as a unilateral threat from an outside force (as it was initially presented, resulting in his months-long period of silence with the PRT), he'll continue

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arming his militias and acting independently. If Dostum continues to play ball, then the leader of the largest illegally-armed network in the region will sanction the DIAG process, isolating and marginalizing noncompliant illegally-armed groups. Having Dostum work with the PRT, GOA and IC has already yielded results; he's been helping defuse regional tensions through orders to his subcommanders, for example. The more politically enfranchised he feels, the less likely he is to sanction violence coming from his militias. END COMMENT.

19. (SBU) EMBASSY COMMENT: Central authorities in Kabul have an overall plan for the disbandment of illegal armed groups that envisions the first five priority provinces for DIAG to be Takhar, Herat, Kapisa, and Farah. Factors in the decision making process included a willing governor, a relatively stable security situation, and an adequate Afghan security presence factors that are not yet present in Faryab. While events such as the one organized by Dostum are helpful, in that weapons and ammunition are taken out of circulation, the ultimate goal of DIAG is the disbandment of the groups, not simply the handing over of weapons. In addition, the international community in Kabul views the weapons handover in Sherberghan primarily as a publicity play by Dostum to atone for his party's involvement in the recent violence in Maimana (Reftel). END EMBASSY COMMENT.

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